

The Presidents Return to Newport



Grand March climaxing Newport's Colonial Pilgrimage is led by Governor and Mrs. Samuel Ward (A. H. G. Ward and Mrs. Henry S. Wheeler who arranged the celebration). Ward was Governor 1765-67. Second in the line: President and Mrs. George Washington (in real life Mr. and Mrs. W. Gurnee Dyer).



Dancers in modern dress mingled with the famed historical personages who returned for the evening to Newport's Artillery Armory.

Their Dancing Reappearance Highlighted the Colonial Pilgrimage Celebration

BY GARDNER DUNTON

FOURTEEN presidents of the United States, who had been entertained in Newport during the past 150 years, returned to the old city recently for the Presidential Ball, climax of the pilgrimage to Colonial Newport.

Parading with their ladies up Washington Square, they saw again the old Colony House, where many of them had been officially received before. They paused on the steps to witness a minuet staged by the younger generation and to receive the plaudits of several thousand citizens.

After dancing out the evening at the Newport Artillery Armory, they vanished as they had come, leaving the city once again with memories of distinguished visitors of a bygone era.

Thanks to modern costumers and make-up artists, present-day citizens had made the return a living tableau.

Few Summer resorts have entertained so many presidents as Newport has. Some merely stopped over a day for political reasons before proceeding by boat to Providence; others came socially to enjoy the lavish hospitality down Bellevue Avenue.

George Washington made several visits on official business, the chief one being in 1790 when, accompanied by Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, he was royally feted by the town and its gentry. George always insisted on paying his own expenses and hence insisted on staying at a Mrs. Almy's boarding house.

Jefferson never returned as president, for Newport was not in love with his political ideas at the time, but James Monroe found occasion to borrow the house of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry for a stay of a few weeks in 1817.

John Quincy Adams merely stretched his legs ashore as the New York-Providence packet stopped but John was known to have referred to Aquidneck Island as "the most beautiful gem on the bosom of the ocean."

Andrew Jackson was perhaps one of the

more popular visiting presidents when, in 1833, accompanied by Vice-President John C. Calhoun, he was given a rousing welcome by the citizens who admired his democratic habits. Later, Presidents Martin Van Buren, James K. Polk, James Buchanan and Millard Fillmore stopped for brief visits in the hot Summer months. Fillmore even had a hotel named after him.

After the Civil War, presidential visits became personal rather than official. President Grant stayed with the L. P. Mortons in 1869. He found time to attend a city reception and dance; he and Mrs. Grant had to borrow clothes for the affair from their hosts because their trunks were shipped by mistake to Newport, N. H.

Others entertained in the Gay 90's were Presidents Rutherford B. Hayes, Chester A. Arthur and Grover Cleveland. Cleveland often returned to enjoy the fishing at the exclusive Gooseberry Island Club.

LOYALTY to his beloved Rough Riders brought Teddy Roosevelt to Newport several times, though never as president. In 1898, he headed the guard of honor at the funeral services for Lieutenant Tiffany of the Rough Riders and a few years later he came on to stand as godfather to the son of another of his officers. He spoke at the Naval War College in 1912 and attended a public clambake but found Newport was not particularly interested in the Bull Moose Party.

The return of the presidents was perhaps the most picturesque feature of the pilgrimage, which saw the Governor come down to help revive the old Election Day.

Newport appears to have awakened to its priceless heritage from the past, and through the Gay 90's Committee, which sponsored the pilgrimage, and the Preservation Society, which seeks to keep some of its famous colonial houses and other buildings, it may yet rival Williamsburg as a shrine of olden times.



President and Mrs. Millard Fillmore (Mr. and Mrs. Roger H. King) enjoy a waltz.



Vice-President John C. Calhoun (Bud Berlenbach) and Mrs. Calhoun (Carol Frazer) get somewhat ahead of their times with a bit of jitterbugging.



George Washington (Mr. Dyer) looks puzzled as Thomas Jefferson (George R. Draper) tries to pass off a Continental note on the bartender. Miss Jefferson (Mrs. Draper) and Admiral De Ternay (Ernest L. Denomme) look on.



Mrs. Grover Cleveland (Mrs. Bradford Leys) and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant (Mrs. Robert E. Whitford) find the ball amusing as they sit out one of the dances.



John Quincy Adams (John H. Greene Jr., clerk of Newport Superior Court) is all smiles. His partner in early period costume is Mrs. Dorothy Gay.

Photos by John T. Hopf